To: wq-news@googlegroups.com[]
From: wq-news@googlegroups.com
Sent: Thur 9/27/2012 12:38:48 AM
Subject: [WQ News] Feds release new water data from Wyoming fracking area
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
the Associated Press reports
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Feds release new water data from Wyoming fracking area

Denver Business Journal by Cathy Proctor, Reporter

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The U.S. Geological Survey on Wednesday released two reports on samples it took from two groundwater wells near Pavillion, Wyo. — an area that's been the focus of controversy over whether oil and gas operations such as hydraulic fracturing have contaminated drinking water wells.

The natural gas field near Pavillion is owned by Denver-based Encana Oil & Gas (USA) Inc.

The USGS's reports detailed how the samples were collected, and the raw data from the samples, but offered no conclusions, the agency said, per its agreement with the state of Wyoming.

The latest reports show lower levels of benzene, a carcinogen, in groundwater samples than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reported late last year in the area, the Associated Press reports.

But EPA spokeswoman Alisha Johnson said in an emailed statement that the USGS's data is "generally consistent" with the EPA's previously released data.

The sampling and analysis plan was developed by the USGS with help from representatives of Wyoming, the EPA, and the Northern Arapahoe and Eastern Shoshone Tribes.

"Today's USGS reports are intended to provide additional scientific information to decision makers and all interested parties on the composition of the groundwater represented in the aquifer underlying Pavillion," said David Mott, Director of the USGS Wyoming Water Science Center. "While USGS did not interpret the data as part of this sampling effort, the raw data results are adding to the body of knowledge to support informed decisions."

In December 2011, the EPA issued a draft report saying that groundwater pollution in two deep wells near Pavillion is "likely associated with gas production practices, including hydraulic fracturing."

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is the controversial practice of injecting water and chemicals underground to free natural gas and oil.

Many groups, including Encana and Wyoming state officials, criticized the EPA's December report.

Wyoming asked the USGS to take more water samples from the wells, in coordination with the EPA, but

not to analyze it, the USGS said in its announcement.

The water samples were collected in April, although the USGS said it was unable to collect groundwater-quality data at one of the two deep monitoring wells built by the EPA for its tests.

Wednesday, Encana said it had conducted a preliminary review of the USGS data and found nothing surprising.

"More important is the fact that USGS only sampled one of the two monitoring wells [that were the subject of the EPA's report]," Encana spokesman Doug Hock said in an email. "This goes to the heart of concerns raised by state and federal agencies, as well as Encana — the EPA's wells are improperly constructed. Specifically, the report seems to indicate that USGS declined to sample MW02 because the well could not provide a sample that was representative of actual water conditions."

Wyoming Gov. Matt Mead said in a statement thanked the USGS for collecting the information.

"I have said that we will be guided by science in the way we react to the investigation of impacts on water outside of Pavillion," Mead said in the statement. "The collaborative effort used to gather this data allowed Wyoming experts to have a say about sampling methodology and testing procedures. I feel that the process used to acquire this data was an improvement on the process used for the draft EPA report last December."

EPA's Johnson said that the new data "was released for public comment and review, and the important feedback received from these steps will help inform the final analysis. Once finalized, the latest EPA data, along with the USGS data, will be submitted to an independent, expert peer review as part of the ongoing scientific process later this year."

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